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FARM FACE-LIFTING DEMONSTRATIONS

Their History, How They're Conducted, and What They Accomplish

A farm "face-lifting", in its present conception, consists of installing a complete soil conservation program on a farm in one day, in so far as is seasonably possible. Aside from the benefits to the farm selected for the demonstration, a face-lifting serves two principal purposes. First, it dramatizes the need for soil and water conservation. Second, it demonstrates to many people at one time that successful soil conservation means not just the use of one or two practices but a well-coordinated program that combines all needed practices in a complete conservation farm plan.

The earliest demonstration of the kind was held November 7, 1941 on the farm of Harry W. Shealey eight miles from Newberry, in Newberry County, South Carolina. A week later, on November 14, a similar demonstration was held on the farm of Ira B. Newsom, four miles west of Bishopville, in Lee County, South Carolina. The idea seems to have originated with Ernest Carnes and J. H. Johnston, technicians employed by the U. S. Soil Conservation Service and located in South Carolina. Each of the two farms covered about 135 acres, but otherwise they were quite different. The Shealey farm was selected to represent Piedmont conditions, and the Newsom farm to represent Coastal conditions. CCC enrollees from nearby camps did most of the work during the one-day demonstrations. Equipment was furnished by the camps and local farmers. Neither the Shealey farm nor the Newsom farm was mechanized at that time. About 1,500 people attended the demonstration on the Newsom farm.

Although the term "farm face-lifting" had not then been thought of, these two earliest demonstrations were similar to the ones being held today, with complete conservation programs established in a single day. The farm plans were made by technicians of the Soil Conservation Service, who with the aid of large farm maps and loudspeakers briefed the crowd on what it was all about. Practices applied included terraces, meadow outlets, contour strip cropping, pasture and woodland improvement, liming, fertilizing, pasture seeding, planting field borders, construction of contour fences, and others. Extension specialists and foresters joined the Soil Conservation Service technicians in discussing the work at different points as groups of visitors were conducted over the farm.

Because of war, there were no more such demonstrations until September 21, 1946. On that day the first major face-lifting demonstration was held on the farm of Claude Milner, near Pleasantville, Iowa. Originator of

this event was Clay Barnett, district conservationist for the U. S. Soil Conservation Service at Des Moines.

For several years previous, radio station WHO at Des Moines had served as one of the principal sponsors of a Cornbelt Plowing Match. Barnett had been active in this program. A group of committeemen, including Barnett, met in the spring of 1946 at a hotel in Des Moines to plan for the 1946 plowing match. It was at this meeting that Barnett brought out his idea for a farm face lifting, which would accomplish in one day as much soil conservation work as the average farmer could do in four or five years. The Committee agreed, and all went to work with enthusiasm to organize and plan a great conservation demonstration for early autumn.

The success of this first major face lifting was an eye-opener for everyone. It drew an attendance in excess of 40,000. Co-sponsors with WHO were the Marion County Soil Conservation District, the Soil Conservation Service, the Iowa Department of Agriculture, the Iowa State College and Extension Service, the Farm Bureau and Chambers of Commerce of the towns of Knoxville, Pella, and Pleasantville. A total of 250 farmers and Iowa businessmen donated a day's work, while implement companies and commercial firms supplied equipment and materials, and Claude Milner himself put up \$3,000 for purchase of such cash materials as fencing and other items.

The principal address of the day was delivered by Dr. Hugh H. Bennett, Chief of the U. S. Soil Conservation Service and was broadcast over a national network. The press gave the event wide publicity. It was, in fact, the newspapers who dubbed the demonstration a "farm face lifting." The appellation took hold immediately and has been generally used since to refer to this kind of demonstration involving the complete remodeling of a farm on a conservation basis, in the working hours of one day.

After this first major farm face lifting, the idea spread rapidly. Some 20 such events were held in 1947 in six different states, including Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio and Kentucky. During 1948 more than 20 such demonstrations were held in as many different states, making a total of about 50 altogether in the two post-war years. The face liftings have drawn an attendance of upwards of 500,000 people, many of whom came from cities to take their first object lesson in soil conservation. Likewise, most of the larger and some of the smaller face liftings have been visited by people from foreign countries. Many members of foreign embassy staffs, as well as personnel of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, have attended face liftings for the specific purpose of helping to spread and speed up soil conservation in other parts of the world.

Face liftings are now being planned for the spring and summer of 1949 in the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Arkansas, Tennessee, and other parts of the country. Inquiries about them should be addressed to the State Conservationist, Soil Conservation Service, of the different states, as

these men will know of any plans being made for the one-day soil conservation demonstrations. Usually it takes several months to plan and organize a face lifting.

A conservation face lifting is definitely the people's own show. The primary purpose is to speed soil conservation in the community. Someone in the community gets the idea, passes it on to others; the next step is to secure sponsorship by a group, or groups, able to promote the project and raise the necessary funds. Some of the organizations which have effectively cooperated in sponsoring face liftings in the past two years are:

Soil conservation districts; the Grange; the Farm Bureau; newspapers and radio stations; farm magazines; bankers associations; chambers of commerce; junior chambers of commerce; Friends of the Land; colleges; the American Legion; machinery dealers associations; church organizations; state associations of soil conservation districts; Extension Services; all major civic clubs; veterans training classes; the Red Cross in providing first aid units; and such youth groups as the Future Farmers, 4-H clubs, and boy scouts. Business concerns in all categories have contributed to most of the face liftings thus far held throughout the country.

The sponsors usually appoint a general manager, with assistant directors, whose duty it is to form an administrative body sufficient to attend to all details. The general manager usually is a well-known public figure, active in farm circles, and alert to all phases of the life of his community. He may be a farmer or rancher, a farm editor, a member of the local soil conservation districts board of supervisors, or if the event is on a state-wide basis, a member of the state association of soil conservation districts.

Selection of committee membership comes next. A sample committee setup might be headed by a general advisory committee, with eight to ten major committees listed under it, and enough sub-committees to attend to the many and varied details involved. Major committees will include those on publicity, on farm operations, on parking and traffic, on machinery and equipment, on concessions, and a program committee. Under the general farm operations committee would be included appropriate sub-committees on trucking and spreading lime, fence removal and construction, diversion ditch or terrace construction, pond construction, fitting seed beds, pasture renovation, tree planting, drainage tile installation, technical exhibits, and on other technical subject matter. The magnitude and diversity of the demonstration activities will guide the extent of the administrative setup. Experiences have shown that the secret of successful face liftings is in having as many people as possible actively participating long in advance of the actual demonstration day. Time and effort of all participants are donated and this in itself appears to work for success.

It is considered ill-advised to plan a face lifting demonstration without starting the organization at least six months in advance. The press

and radio committee usually is set up first, as they are able to activate other committees through the stimulation of timely press and radio releases.

Selecting the farm is an important feature of planning for a successful face-lifting field day. Many people have a hand in the selection — committee members, neighboring farmers and business people and others. The demonstration of course must be located in an area where there is an active soil conservation district program. The farm can thus be planned by Soil Conservation Service technicians located in the district, and district supervisors and farmers are available to assist in many phases of the event. Any normally populated area will do. If the demonstration is sponsored on a state-wide basis, a central location is desirable. Locating a demonstration within a reasonable distance of a larger center of population contributes to better cooperation from civic organizations and calls the attention of city people to soil conservation. Good roads leading to the location are essential.

Face liftings have been held on farms of all sizes, from 30 acres to 200 acres in the East and Middle West, and as large as 800 acres in the West. Usually a large farm is considered best; the size being limited only by the ability of the labor crews to complete the entire job in one day. Experience has shown that the size of the operation is a strong drawing card in attracting spectators.

The committees select a farm that is fairly representative for the area in which it is located. It is preferable that somewhere near half of the land be under cultivation, that part of it is rolling and part level, and that there are evidences of erosion recognizable to the layman's eye. However, it should be in such condition that a changeover to soil conservation will make the land capable of raising and educating a farm family in line with better community standards of living. The farmer himself should be enthusiastic about the soil conservation way of farming and willing to continue the program as a permanent way of using his land.

A face lifting event should be, of course, a non-profit undertaking. Usually no admission, entrance, parking or other charges are permitted except for food and soft drinks. Cash required for the demonstration is usually donated; seed, fertilizers and lime, fencing and building materials, planting stock, facilities, and labor and equipment are donated. For a major face lifting, as many as several hundred individuals or groups may contribute in one or more ways. The owner of the farm frequently is the largest contributor himself, in that he supplies seed, fertilizers, equipment, and cash if he can afford it.

Agencies of the Department of Agriculture contribute exactly what they contribute in helping any farmer do a better job on his land -- technical counsel. Representatives of the Soil Conservation Service make the conservation farm plans for the face liftings. Usually, they supervise the

work of installation on the day of the demonstration. Extension Service representatives also participate; county agents usually serve on one or more of the committees, and Extension information specialists assist with the information program preceding the demonstration.

The benefits of a face lifting field day now are widely apparent. Such demonstrations keep the subject of soil and water conservation in the public mind weeks before and after the event. They are effective in showing to many farmers at one time what is meant by application of a complete farm conservation plan. They help the city man and farmer realize they have a mutual interest in the soil. They demonstrate that soil conservation now is a generally accepted thing among good farmers. They stimulate farmer interest in the soil conservation districts. They present the complete picture of soil conservation to farmers who are in the early stages of applying conservation plans and help them speed up their programs.

A report on the farm of Claude Milner, near Pleasantville, Iowa, where the first major face lifting was held September 21, 1946, will give an idea of the benefits to the farm selected for the demonstration. In August 1948, Mr. Milner said "I can truthfully say the production on the farm as a whole has more than doubled" in the two years since the demonstration on his farm. His corn yield increased from around 30 to 35 bushels an acre to an average of 60 bushels in 1947. The production from his permanent pasture more than doubled. In addition, the face lifting on the Milner farm has been instrumental in influencing other farmers, both in the immediate neighborhood and over the country, to adopt soil conservation programs.

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